

anything short of a miracle by youheldyourbreath

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, and now they own up to it, the wheeler siblings definitely lied about who they liked, what happens after El closes the gate

Language: English

Characters: Jim "Chief" Hopper, Nancy Wheeler

Relationships: Eleven/Mike Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-10-30

Updated: 2017-10-30

Packaged: 2022-04-02 01:49:18

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,677

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Mike has spent the last year in abject agony over losing Eleven.

And then, he gets her back.

anything short of a miracle

It's not like he expects her to walk through the door. He doesn't. Mike Wheeler, if anything, is expecting to die. He made his peace with death the moment he realized Will was the spy and the demodogs came to kill them all in the lab. Every minute he has had since then, in his opinion, is a happy accident.

But then, she does slide the lock off of its hinges and knocks the door open with her mind. And suddenly, after nearly a year of hopelessly hoping beyond all hope that she was somehow alive, she is standing in the Byers' living room with a trickle of blood dropping down her face. She looks intense and hard and beautiful.

He can't help himself. Mike Wheeler smiles. She catches his eye and softens and the world, which had been dreary and dark the last year, explodes into vibrant color.

They gravitate toward each other like a magnetic pull and, then, they are clinging to each other. He exhales at the relief of her touch. She is soft, maybe softer than she had been before, definitely softer than he remembers and it startles him. He realizes he didn't remember what she felt like all these months. Mike isn't sure how he lived without her.

The answer: he barely lived at all.

He tells her that he never gave up on her, not really, and that he called her over the radio every day for 353 days. And she knows. She heard. It does not give her any relief, especially because Hopper knocks him out of the way and yanks El into a hug. He nearly chokes on the angry bile building up in his throat.

He lashes out and hits Hopper who grabs him roughly by the scruff of his sweatshirt and tugs him into Mrs. Byers' bedroom. He doesn't blame El. He blames Hopper. He blames him and hates him and throws all of his grief from the last year into hitting Hopper as hard as he can. The Sherriff is a big man and Mike has all of the leverage and strength of a fourteen year old boy but he still manages to make Hopper stumble backwards against the door until he gives into his

overwhelming heartache and collapses against the Sheriff to cry.

Hawkins takes and takes and takes from Michael Wheeler. It is a black hole sucking in all of the goodness and grace that he once had from the day Will Byers went missing.

When he calms down enough to wander back out into the living room with Hopper on his heels, he spots Eleven again and remembers that the world is going to end. He has been reunited with her only for the world to freakin' end. He lingers near her as they make a plan to save the day and, of course, their best hope is her. Just like the last time and the last time, that devastating moment in that classroom at Hawkins's middle school, took her from him.

As everyone starts to collect what they need to make the last push for battle, Mike gathers Eleven outside to have a moment alone.

"I hate this," he grumbles.

She nods in that silent but infinitely wise way that is achingly familiar to him.

"Just be careful, alright?" He roughs out, his fingers itch to brush against hers. "I can't lose you again." Whatever embarrassment he used to have about his feelings for Eleven feel so inconsequential after spending a year apart from each other. He didn't say all of the things he wanted to say the last time and now, now that he's been given a second chance, he cannot and will not squander it by withholding words.

"You won't lose me," she shakes her head and he wants to believe her but as each minute ticks closer and closer to closing the gate he isn't certain. There are too many variables in play that could kill her.

"Do you promise?" he asks, a lone tear escaping his eye.

"Promise," she whispers. Then, the world zeroes in on this significant moment and Mike Wheeler knows that this could be the last time he sees her. When he lost her the first time he hadn't known. He didn't get to say goodbye. This time he knows what she is marching off to go and do and won't take this moment for granted. She leans in and

so does he, reaching for one reassuring taste. A last kiss.

Hopper shatters the crystal bubble they have wrapped around their potential embrace. All Mike can do is nod at her with a reassuring, watery smile. His nod says so many things: stay safe, come home, don't leave me.

Once she's gone off to fight a battle he cannot be a part of, he starts to panic. Pacing the Byers' floor isn't enough. He should be out there, he should be with her, he should be doing so much more than being sidelined in a war that he knows better than most of the adults taking part.

So, he decides to put his friends front and center in the war. They can draw the demodogs away by lighting a fire in the middle of whatever central point in the tunnel they can reach. And, the prospect of hundreds of creatures running straight toward him, he finds doesn't scare him. The only thing that actually terrifies him now is losing Eleven. And if this little distraction can help her stay alive he is willing to risk it. He is willing to risk it all for her.

And he does.

When they are all out of the hole and the demodogs run around Dustin and Steve like they don't even notice them, Mike knows that Eleven is closing the gate. Or trying to and he clings to the hope that she will keep her promise.

Exhausted and covered in dirt, the boys and Max all make their way back to the Byers' house. Billy is laying unconscious in the same place that they left him. The rest of the house is empty. He imagines that whatever happened to Will he will be too tired to move and Mrs. Byers will keep him comfortably wherever they are.

But Eleven can't stay at the lab. Hopper will have to bring her back here. He has to. Mike has to see her.

It takes Hopper an hour to usher El back to the Byers' and by that time all of the rest of the kids have gone home, Steve playing carpool. He had insisted on taking Mike home, but he couldn't leave. Not until he saw her, again.

When they stumble into the Byers' home, El tucked safely under Hopper's arm, Mike trips into them hugging El tightly. Hopper, thankfully, unwinds himself from the two teenagers so they can hold each other without his assistance. El shutters out a teary breath and Mike squeezes her closer. "You're okay," he whispers.

"I promised," she replies.

Mike clings to her, like he could fuse her into his arms, and breathes, "You're here. You're really here."

Her nose tickles the nape of his neck, "Stay?"

Hopper clears his throat, reluctantly causing Mike to release his vice grip on El, "I need to get you home, kid. You're exhausted."

"But," her mouth falls open, "Mike."

Hopper sighs like they have had this argument before. Mike foolishly hopes that they have, that Eleven has spent the last year thinking about him as much as he thought about her. Clinging to the dreams and hopes and prayers that she was alive out there somewhere. "Eleven," Hopper pockets his hands, "We'll talk about this later. Come on, say your goodbyes."

"No goodbyes," El says, her eyes blown wide. She anxiously reaches for Mike's hands and he squeezes them. She has tiny hands, soft and gentle.

"Go," Mike says, "This isn't a goodbye. No more goodbyes."

"No goodbyes," she repeats.

He leans in, again, like he could steal a kiss off of her if he is quick enough, but Hopper is quicker. He steps between them and Eleven audibly groans. Hopper gestures between them and Mike bites his tongue as Hopper lays down the law, "None of that. We're not gonna do that, thank you."

Eleven ducks her head out from behind Hopper and she smiles at him. Every crack, every weighed down worry of the last year fades

with that one smile. Mike Wheeler feels like himself again. The vibrant colors she filled his gaze with from before exploding into sunshine.

On the way out the door, Eleven steals a kiss on his cheek and Mike falters. He goes to sleep on the Byers' couch that night with a smile on his face.

When the Byers and Nancy come back from Eleven's cabinet closer to the morning, Nancy nudges Mike awake and with the help of Jonathan the two of them load him into the back of Jonathan's car to go home.

Nancy tucks him into bed as the sun starts to rise and she ghosts a kiss on Mike's forehead. He reaches for his sister's hand as she tries to leave his room, "Nance?"

She pauses, "Mike?"

"I lied. I like Eleven."

She sits beside him on his bed and squeezes his fingers, the way she had once done when he was a little kid. He has all of these memories of Nancy before she had gone off to high school and left him in the dust. "I lied, too. I like Jonathan."

Mike grins, "I just wanted to say it. Out loud."

Nancy leans in like she's telling him a secret, "Me too."

Mike throws his arms around Nancy and crushes her into a hug, "I'm sorry I've been so crappy."

Nancy shakes her head and hugs her brother tighter, "I've been crappy, too. We get to do it differently this time, though."

She's right. He gets another chance.

And this time, he doesn't waste it pretending that Eleven isn't anything short of a miracle.